

THE FLYLEAF

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Quarterly October 1969

HERE COME THE JUDGES

The leading article is by David Hamilton Horne, a reprint of his column in the January 1969 issue of Scholarly Books in America, a Quarterly Bibliography of University Press Publications. David Horne received his PhD from Yale University and is now the Associate Editor of the Harvard University Press.

Dr. Horne's career as teacher, scholar, and editor has been a distinguished one. He has written and read many reviews, and in this (no doubt) heartfelt spoof he pays his respects to certain reviewers whom perhaps we have all met. In the final fictitious letter to the editor, though still in the same vein, he lays down a few ground rules for reviewing which really reviews.

This pleasant excursion into parody is here presented with the gracious permission of the author and the publisher.

HERE COME THE JUDGES

by

David Horne

Type I. The Pot and Kettle

I. W. Gronabee, The Parameters of Social Fluxion. Eastern University Press, 346 pp., \$9.75.

The consumption-projection equation cannot be tested by a double-logarithmic-static model, as Gronabee tries to do, and when he says that the biological evidence is in support of the ordered-random-intervals model, he really means the balls-and-boxes model. It would have been more helpful had he used my grape-seeds model, which would have annexed other possibilites not otherwise within its field of relevance.

On the one hand, Gronabee is concerned, within his frame of reference, to show that the entire history of mankind exemplifies a constant anthithesis between what man has tried to be and what he can never be. On the other hand, I have been at pains to prove that the social equation is merely a means of mediating between innovation and conformity. We have here a profound methodological confusion.

Besides which, the price of the book is exorbitant, and the index is inadequate.

Type II. The Smartcracker

Jackie Lee Carbuncle, <u>Positive Incompetence and Negative Capability</u>. Echelon Academy Press, xxi 227 pp., \$6.95.

Miss Carbuncle's novel thesis, which is neither a novel nor a thesis, falls between two elfin grots. Keats, she maintains, would have been a better poet if he had been less gifted. This fantasy will be of negative value to every student of poetry. At least, it doesn't cost much.

Type III. Review of the Author Instead of the Book

Vladimir Astropovic, <u>A Pride of Butterflies</u>, translated by Isaac Hanrahan. Silicon Publishers, 842 pp., \$3.25.

Astropovic has been too little noted and long misunderstood. Through years of patient observation, he gradually learned the language of butterflies. Fellow scientists scorned him because he was self-taught. This very fine volume, bound in laminated Monarch wings, is a tribute to the man who came to believe that butterflies think like people, and whose critics accused him of thinking like a butterfly.

The fifty illustrations are beautiful, but the publisher has placed too high a price on the book.

Type IV. Review of History Instead of the Book

Edgar Hansel, The Longest Parliament of All. Ambrose Peale Technical Institute Press, 441 pp., \$15.00

It is odd that the hitherto neglected "Longest" Parliament has been neglected. Longer than the "Long" Parliament, this one, when it met in 1613, stretched from Westminster across the Thames and into Southwark. Debate was difficult, because only those in the middle could hear what the end benches were saying, and some of these "middle-benchers," or, more properly, "middle boaters," were too busy bailing to hear anything. It is not surprising that the Parliament was prorogued after four hours. The noble experiment was never repeated. The author concludes with a couplet that sums up his thesis:

It is impertinent to smear The work of Lewis B. Namier.

The book is worth every penny of the \$15.00 asked.

Type V. The Cavalry Attack

Stanley Breakwater, The Pollution of Progress. Elgar University Press, 612 pp., \$15.00

What has come to be known as "The Breakwater Solution," advocated by the author in numerous journal and magazine articles over the past decade, is here set forth in detail in a volume the best part of which is its title.

To break a lance with the gray eminence of urban affairs may seem foolhardy, but to re-main silent would be criminal. For the pollution solution of the future, we cannot afford to rely upon awakened public concern, as I have shown elsewhere. Breakwater's basic and fatal miscalculation is that an awakened electorate will force a government to take any action that will increase its taxes. My own contention, which Breakwater stubbornly refuses to accept, is that his solution is composed of one part $\rm H_2O$ and two parts hogwash.

The book is too expensive at any price.

Reference List of Beginnings (Choose One)

Favorable

- 1. The author has brilliantly encapsulated the tensions of Poon County in this handsomely bound, moderately priced book that is a pleasure to look at on the coffee table.
- 2. The value of this stimulating account of the discovery of snail fever lies not so much in the clarity of its language as in its revelation that great scientific discoveries are usually side effects of the common cold.
- 3. The recent appearance of two (three, four, five) books enables us to reconsider the gamut of classical studies.

Unfavorable

- 1. From its title one would suppose this book to deal with the vital Czech origin of Russian Pan-Slavism. The reader will be disappointed, for the book is wholly concerned with yeast molds.
- 2. In this new edition of the works of the Sage of Saugus Junction, the editors have taken such pains with their footnotes that they almost forgot to include the text.
- 3. The donnée of American scholarship is that if one brings enough detail together in one place, it will sort itself into a coherent point of view. The <u>Angst</u> of American scholars is that they have to wait for us English to do it for them.

To the Book Review Editor

Sir: Perhaps the most significant aspect of Jonathan Hedley's review of my Elwood Tuttle: The Early Years is that it has no significant aspect. One cannot escape the feeling that Hedley subscribes to the theory that a review is an occasion for waging a personal vendetta based on professional jealousy.

When a reviewer can't think of any thing else to say, it may appear useful to point out, as Hedley does, that the book is marred by almost a hundred typographical errors. It so happens, however, that I have gone over the pages of Hedley's Elwood Tuttle as Man and Thinker and he has over a hundred errors. Moreover, he has stubbornly failed to make use of the Tuttle Archive at Lambeth Palace, even though he knows how rich a treasure it is.

The cause of scholarship would be better served if reviewers like Hedley would put aside their petty jeal-ousies and devote themselves to five simple questions: (1) What did the author set out to do? (2) Did he succeed in doing it? (3) Was it worth doing? (4) In what particular respects did he succeed? (5) In what particular respects, if any, did he fail?

A review is only one man's opinion invested with the sanctity of type. It stands in print for all the world to read and, without evidence to the contrary, believe. How do we know what prompts the reviewer to write what he writes? Can it be that the author of the book he is judging has beaten him to a lush post at Berkeley? Or is considering him for a \$50,000 appointment at Stony Brook? Or can it be that the reviewer was berated by his wife at breakfast that morning for twitching his nose between each bite of egg?

Of what worth is any review unless we know something of the reviewer's motivation, or unless the author reviewed is also given a chance to be heard? I propose a reform. Book review pages should be divided between two kinds of reviews, those which are short and factual and those which are longer and evaluative. The latter should consist not merely of (1) the reviewer's judgment but also of (2) the author's rejoinder to the review and (3) the reviewer's surrejoinder to the author -- all to be published together in the same place.

This approach is used now, of course, but only by means of letters to the editor, like this one, and time and space separate the review from the rejoinder. We could obtain a clearer understanding of the worth of a book if the method were regularly practiced, and if the review consisted regularly of the three parts. At least, scholars could hear both sides,

and the reviewer might be induced to judge more objectively if he knew that his judgment would not stand unpricked.

As we know, reviews often determine the success or failure of a man's work before it has been widely read. One prejudiced review by a respected expert should not be allowed to damn a person's career. Why should certain ones among us, like Jonathan Hedley, be given power over their peers? He says that I flit from thought to thought, like a hummingbird. Well, I think he's a saprophytic fraud, battening on the intellect of others, and if I could review his book, I would demonstrate what I mean.

Respectfully yours,

H.R.L. Pebbles

MEMORIAL GIFTS

This issue of the FLYLEAF contains the notices of a considerable number of memorial gifts to the Fondren Library, and the attention of the readers is directed to them. All those who make or who have an especial interest in hearing that memorial gifts have been made are of course notified by letter, and suitable volumes bearing memorial plates are selected for the Library. Over the years, hundreds and indeed thousands of valuable acquisitions have come to the Library in this way.

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